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SUBJECT: SLOVENIA H1N1 UPDATE: SPIKE IN H1N1-RELATED DEATHS LEADS TO GOVERNMENT CALLS FOR VACCINATION

¶1. (U) Summary: As of December 4, Slovenia had registered nine deaths from H1N1 cases, including three who had no previous health issues. Over fifty people are currently reported to be hospitalized with H1N1 across Slovenia. The Slovenian Ministry of Health is using the recent spike in H1N1 cases to urge people to be vaccinated against this virus, but to date only 40,000 people of the two million population have received the vaccine. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The number of H1N1 related deaths in Slovenia rose to nine on Thursday, after a young man with no prior conditions died in Ljubljana's Polyclinic. In the course of the past seven days, the number of swine-flu related deaths in Slovenia has grown from two to nine. The majority of the deaths attributed to H1N1 in Slovenia have been the result of serious bacterial pneumonia and sepsis that followed infection with H1N1.

¶3. (U) This week Prime Minister Borut Pahor received the vaccine in Ljubljana and called on people to get vaccinated against the H1N1 flu. Though he had originally said he would not get the vaccine, he stated that he had changed his mind after meeting with epidemiologists and Health Ministry experts. Pahor, making H1N1 prevention an economic issue, said that the H1N1 pandemic could affect Slovenia's economic recovery and that Slovenia can only push ahead with its reforms with a healthy population.

¶4. (U) Health Minister Borut Miklavcic stated that while H1N1-related deaths were tragic, the figures in Slovenia were still below the international average. He further remarked that there is currently no need to declare a pandemic or to introduce any additional measures at this point. He noted that 49,000 doses of the vaccine have been administered so far, out of the 124,000 doses that Slovenia had received to date. As a further means to get the vaccine to as many people as possible, the Slovenian government's expert-level working group on H1N1 has recommended opening more vaccination centers in big cities and keeping them open over the weekends.

¶5. (U) At post, the embassy has noted an increase in sick leave taken by local and American staff, and there have been multiple cases of suspected H1N1 infection within the community. The medical unit has organized an opportunity for all interested staff to be vaccinated with the Slovenian supply this week, and the consular section has disseminated a warden message to the American community about the availability of the vaccine on the local health system.

FREDEN